# The COMPASS

AMERICAN · ASSOCIATION · OF · SOCIAL · WORKERS

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DECEMBER, 1937 VOLUME XIX, NUMBER 3


## Articles


New Orleans Looks Back

What Is the Merit System?

Member Participation in Chicago

Social Work and the Social Insurances

Committees and Divisions 1937-1938

News and Notes — Membership

Chicago Spotlights a Crisis


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## Contributors

Arlien Johnson • Leon H. Richman

Leola Dragon • William W. Burke

Milton Shufro

BRIEF but to the point is the article by William W. Burke "What is the Merit System?" The question is asked in the title and answered in the text.

♣ ♣ ♣

GROWTH not only in numbers but in professional development is indicated in the historical sketch of the New Orleans Chapter which begins on page 12.

♣ ♣ ♣

ALL but one of the thirty-two member schools of the Association of Schools were reported on in the November issue in an article entitled "Professional School Developments 1937-38." The report of the Atlanta School, received too late for that issue, is included on page 15 of this issue.

♣ ♣ ♣

OLD social work skills with new variations will be required in the administration of the social insurances, Arlien Johnson believes. Her brief is presented in this issue under the heading "Social Work and the Social Insurances." The fourth paper in this series by Rosemary Reynolds will be included in the January "Compass." She calls it "People Don't Behave Like Numbers."

♣ ♣ ♣

LIGHT on the question of membership participation is thrown by the report of a special committee of the Chicago Chapter headed by Leon H. Richman. The committee findings are entitled "Membership Participation in Chicago."

♣ ♣ ♣

BOTH a journeyman newspaper man and social worker is Milton Shufro. A member of the Chicago Chapter, he directed the publicity program described in "Chicago Spotlights A Crisis" on a special assignment made possible by cooperation between the Chicago Chapter and the national office.

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**Delegate Conference Seattle, Wash., June 23, 24, 25, 1938**

# Membership Participation in Chicago

A Report of The Committee on Evaluation of Program and Membership Participation in the Chicago Chapter.

By **LEON H. RICHMAN,** Chairman

*IT was generally conceded that the development of professional participation of the majority of members had lagged in the chapter. Various attempts had been made to remove the obstacles which seemed to stand in the way, but the results were not wholly satisfactory. The majority of the membership seemed to be static, while a dynamic minority seemed to be carrying more than its share of the load. In view of this, the Executive Committee of the Chicago Chapter appointed a committee to evaluate the chapter program and the related problem of non-attendance at chapter meetings. The six members of the committee were: Miss Carol Goldsteine, Mrs. Edwina M. Lewis, Mrs. Jane M. Moore, Mrs. Goldie Shapiro, Miss Claudia Wanamaker, and Mr. Leon H. Richman, Chairman. Their report follows.*

To evaluate the chapter program, the committee found it necessary to explore the objectives of the chapter and to review the question of participation. In order to secure the opinions of the membership to guide the committee in its thinking, the questionnaire method was decided upon. We wish to take this occasion to express our appreciation to the faithful ninety-three members who exercised their right of franchise by answering the questionnaire. We wonder if this small return is not in itself an index of the very thing this committee was set up to study, namely, the lagging of participation in chapter affairs. The committee felt that it would not rely solely upon this method of inquiry, but by discussion explored the subject further.

In analyzing the problem of participation the committee reviewed some significant developments which have affected the status of the chapter. The establishment of the Delegate Conference in 1934 on a basis of representation has placed a definite responsibility on chapters. The growth in Association membership, and the collection of local dues by the national office, which automatically makes members of the Association also members of the local chapters, have resulted in a great increase in membership in the larger chapters. For example, in 1935, the membership of the Chicago Chapter totalled 531. It was during that year that the change in the policy of collecting dues went into effect. The membership has increased rapidly and at the present there are 865 members. Whereas prior to the change in the collection of dues, individuals presumably joined the chapter because they were interested in doing so, many are now propelled into local membership. These individuals are not necessarily antagonistic to belonging to the local chapter but doubtless many of them would not have joined if the matter were left to their own initiative.

Accompanying these changes are difficult problems of administration and program planning. In-so-far as the local chapter offers the opportunity for members of the Association to get together for discussion and action, it becomes the chief medium for participation in the professional activities of the Association. The effectiveness of chapters in meeting this primary function, has usually been measured in terms of the extent of participation of the membership. The criterion employed to determine the degree of participation has often been the attendance at meetings of the chapter. The validity of this criterion is questionable. It may be a criterion of interest in a particular program and all meetings cannot be of equal interest to all members.

## OBJECTIVES

The chapter program and the problem of participation cannot be treated apart from the objectives of the chapter. The committee wondered about individual interpretation of the objectives of the chapter, which according to our constitution are as follows: "The purposes of the Chicago Chapter shall be to bring together professional social workers for such cooperative efforts as may enable the group more effectively to fulfill its functions in service to society. To this end it may formulate and seek to establish professional ideals and standards, encourage proper and adequate preparation and training, disseminate information concerning social work as a profession, and conduct research, investigations and such other activities as it may deem appropriate. It shall act in accordance with

the aims of the American Association of Social Workers, and shall cooperate with other chapters and members to further the work of the Association."

The question asked with reference to individual interpretation of the objectives of the chapter, was:

"What is your idea of the objectives of the Chicago chapter?"

The replies have been classified and are listed in the order of their frequency:

1. Social action including legislation and interpretation to the community, leading to a general recognition of social work as a profession.
2. Definition, development, and promotion of professional standards both with respect to the chapter and its individual members.
3. Interchange of ideas about social work.
4. Information about trends in the practice of social work, and changing conditions which affect social work.
5. Improvement of personnel standards, working conditions, and professional security.
6. Professional fellowship, stimulation, inspiration.
7. Participation in the general program of the AASW.

It is obvious that there is no essential discrepancy between these objectives and the defined purpose of the chapter. However, the specific nature of membership replies gives added direction for chapter planning.

## PARTICIPATION

The committee assumed that participation is an educational process, which can be achieved only when there is a responsible share on the part of each member in shaping the aims and policies of the chapter. It represents advancement toward professional maturity, and it enhances the value of the person who in turn is enriching and sustaining the profession. It appears that for the individual member to function as an efficient unit and achieve professional awareness requires a certain minimum of participation in the professional organization. The chapter, as well as the Association as a whole, cannot continue to exist as such without this individual participation. It is, therefore, important for the chapter to be concerned with the question of participation at this time when it is in the process of formulating the mutual responsibilities of the professional organization and its membership. This assumption guided the committee in its deliberations.

The individual's primary motive for joining the Association may affect his initial functioning in the organization. In a society where economic insecurity is prevalent, the motivating force for joining or continuing in the Association must be the element of professional status that membership in the Association offers on the job or in securing another one (certification). The sense of security one achieves from being a part of a well organized professional group is a contributory motive. These fundamental needs may easily be satisfied through nominal membership. The Association has also to take cognizance of the fact that a new member may already be the center of a complex of loyalties. For example, specialization of social agencies in which social workers function intensifies separated activities. The Association is, therefore, a collection of separate professional interests. The chapter must plan its program for participation in such a way as to help an individual member to achieve unity with the group, in other words, a professional relatedness. In this unity the chapter will attain its effectiveness.

## MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

The membership of any chapter may be classified in the following groups: 1. Active. 2. Passive. 3. Inert.

1. The *active group* is relatively small but dynamic and carries the load of the chapter activities. The individuals in this group usually function in cycles. When they reach the peak of activities they become somewhat quiescent for a time, but are called upon to perform special tasks in which they have shown skills during their period of intense activity. This group, in addition to its own time, contributes clerical and other services through their respective agencies. The greater the lack of adequate participation on the part of the general membership, the longer will this group remain very active and its energies be exploited by the chapter. It is, of course, neither practical nor desirable that all or a majority of the membership actively participate to this degree, but under the leadership of the chapter its functions could be more adequately distributed among the membership.

2. The *passive group* is fairly large and has potentialities for development but has not been drawn into chapter activities effectively. It has the spark but needs to be fanned. This group usually limits its chapter activities to the attendance at membership meetings, and although it may be interested in the content of the program, it does not contribute to the discussion nor does it share its experiences with other

members. This group challenges the chapter in planning for participation.

3. The *inert group* is familiar to most chapters. Either because of psychological or other reasons, this group fails to respond to any attempts at drawing it into participation. Members in this group might not have joined the local chapter on their own initiative. It would be well for the chapter to recognize its limitations in meeting the professional needs of this group, and consider it inaccessible for the present.

There is one other group of members who do not or cannot participate in chapter activities. These members are active professionally in other organizations. In this instance, the law of physics perhaps operates: "One cannot be in two places at the same time."

## FACILITIES FOR PARTICIPATION

It is assumed that a chapter's effectiveness is measured by its ability to gain real participation from its members. The facilities for participation within a chapter usually are: (a) membership meetings; (b) committees; (c) study groups.

## MEETINGS

Historically, all chapters started with membership meetings as a basis, and some have crystallized on this level of activity. The limitations of meetings as the chief medium of participation become evident when it is realized that the professional organization has an interest as broad as that of social work itself. In keeping with the national situation, during the past few years the Association and its chapters have been concerned chiefly with larger issues such as social legislation and the administration of social welfare laws. To appeal to the majority membership, chapter programs should include professional content as well as social issues and action. If large meetings can be planned only for general subjects with the objective of developing "the long view," other opportunities such as study groups and committees have to be provided for the more immediate and intensive professional problems.

In an attempt to learn the members' thinking on this problem of programs, the committee incorporated two questions in the questionnaire, namely:

Have chapter meetings fulfilled your ideas along this line? (purposes of the Chapter)
and

Would you prefer a year's planned program? If so, have you any suggestions as to the content of a program of this kind?

Twenty-two members felt that the meetings have fulfilled their ideas, twenty-seven, that they have not, and thirty-one, to a limited extent. Criticism was chiefly of the form rather than the content of the program. For example: meetings are too much like lectures. There should be more participation of chapter members. There should be more shaping up of content into concrete form. There is need for critical examination of some of the quite generally accepted premises upon which we have been operating.

With reference to the concrete suggestion of a planned program for a year there was general disapproval, centered around the lack of flexibility in such a plan. Special issues would arise which could not be anticipated. The feeling was that the chapter should be alert to changes and should meet them in advance.

The committee was of the opinion that a membership meeting can offer a unique group experience but it fails when it assumes the form of a lecture class. Careful planning with respect to group processes would be growth producing for the individuals and make the group effective. The business phase of the meeting could offer excellent opportunities for participation which are rarely utilized. The program of the meeting allows little time for business matters. There is no real sharing of the Executive Committee's business with the membership, and business matters are so predigested as to make membership action appear unimportant. Well-planned business meetings could develop a tone and tradition of free participation which would be carried over into all chapter activities.

## COMMITTEES

The democratic process when operating in the chapter makes it necessary for the Executive Committee to call upon the membership to consider and discuss certain issues before final action is taken. In order that such action be the result of careful deliberations, committees should be set up to study and report on issues. This will insure responsible and timely action by the membership, thus eliminating the necessity to vote on blind faith. Committee membership offers the best medium for participation; the individual members experience a professional fellowship and stimulation, and the Chapter as a whole benefits by the action growing out of committee deliberations.

At present there are sixty-nine members who are functioning on nine elected and appointed committees, exclusive of the Executive Committee. It is interesting to note that only six members are serving on two committees, of these,

(*Continued on page* 23)

# WHAT ROLE WILL THE SOCIAL WORKER PLAY?

*The question of the adaptability of social work skills in the field of social insurance can be expected to provoke widespread discussion of the relationship between social work training and experience and the administration of insurance provisions. Also the whole extension and expansion of public welfare operation can be expected to provoke discusssion on the development of the advisory consultative function of the professional social work group as the less direct application of social work skills in connection with certain governmental welfare functions. Such discussion the Association believes should help to clarify the position of social work as a function based on the premise that special skills (which can be transferred through training) are necessary equipment for any person charged with the administration of programs designed to aid or counsel human beings in difficulty. The following paper by Arlien Johnson, of the Graduate School of Social Work, University of Washington, Seattle, is the third in a series of discussions of this question prepared for The Compass.*

## Social Work and the Social Insurances

### Will Present Opportunity to Apply Old Skills to New Tasks.

By ARLIEN JOHNSON

THE ENACTMENT of the Federal Social Security Act and the subsequently rapid acceptance by the states of its provisions for social insurance and public assistance have been welcomed by social workers as epoch making events. No one seems to have questioned the importance of the use of social work skills in the administration of public assistance, but apparently many people including some social workers, have doubts about the applicability of social work methods to the administration of social insurance.

At least three factors might be distinguished which confuse the relationship between social work and social insurance. One of these is the influence of European, particularly British, precedent in the administration of social insurances. The fact that the harsh and deterrent nature of poor law relief in England was responsible for the patchwork of legislation for services outside the poor law, enacted in the twentieth century, is frequently overlooked. There was no attempt to "weld the various services into a logical whole co-ordinated by statutory design";[1] nor is the present state of administration in England an enviable one.[2] Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that private or "voluntary" social work in England has not had the influence upon the professionalizing and standardizing of social work methodology that the charity organization movement has had in the United States. England today has no association of professional social workers and no general conference of social work.[3] In other words, foreign experience should be viewed in historical perspective from which warning as well as guidance can be taken.

A second factor which helps to account for the confusion in thinking about social work and social insurance is the uneven rate of change in public opinion from group to group with respect to "the poor." The "taint of pauperism," inherent in the poor law, dies hard. The attitude lingers that social services should be available primarily for the wholly disadvantaged; and that while the administration of these services should be individualized it should also be gently deterrent. In contrast is the slowly growing acceptance of the idea that our present economic system presents many hazards to the majority of the population and therefore a comprehensive system of alleviation should be provided. Public assistance and social insurances are parts of the same system and, if we are to believe our British friends, their administration should be coordinated.[4]

A final factor that confuses the issue is the static and limited concept of social work held even by some within the profession. Social case work which is the keystone of our skill is not the whole of it. The recent expansion of formalized education for social work and the still more recent agreement upon a basic minimum curriculum

[1] Great Britain, Inter-Departmental Committee on Public Assistance Administration, 1924, Cd. 2011.

[2] Ronald C. Davison, "Evolution of British Social Services," *Social Service Review* IX (Dec., 1935) 655-8.

[3] Frank J. Bruno, "Foreign Social Work," *Social Work Yearbook*, 1937, p. 173.

[4] Eveline M. Burns, "The Relation of Unemployment Compensation to the Broader Problems of Relief," *Law and Contemporary Social Problems*, III (Jan., 1936) 154.

Davison, op. cit., pp. 655, 663.

in schools of social work should begin soon to show results in the adaptation and extension of basic skills to new situations.

That the Social Security Act presents new problems, not only of administration but also of philosophy, seems apparent. For the first time in the United States we have federal legislation and tax funds to aid the states in measures for the protection and relief of those threatened by some of the "major hazards of life"—unemployment, old age, childhood dependency. In the field of administration the Act introduces new relationships between the federal, state, and local governments. But equally important, the Act introduces new relationships between old services and new ones. Public assistance in its various categories is not a new undertaking for local governments; but social insurances are an adventure into a new field for both federal and state governments. It is significant that both of these measures are included in one Act and that the Act as a whole is intended to provide some degree of "social security" for at least a part of the population. In the words of the Chairman of the Social Security Board, "These insurance programs, important as they are, represent but one of many approaches to the problem of insecurity. . . . I think we would all agree that for unemployment the only real cure is jobs. . . . But at the same time we must recognize that some needs can be met neither by insurance nor by rehabilitation and re-employment. For want of a better name we describe government measures to meet such needs as 'public welfare.' *It is important to bear in mind that these various approaches to the problem of security are mutually complementary.* . . . The public assistance program included in the Act is like social insurance in that it is intended to make cash income available to individuals under certain circumstances."[5] An important consideration, therefore, in developing techniques of administration would seem to be how to make the public assistance and social insurance features of the Act "mutually complementary."

Progress can be made as rapidly as certain poor law attitudes can be overcome. The United States is in a more fortunate position to develop an integrated administration of public assistance and social insurance than is England because in this country we have had demonstrated over a period of years by private social agencies that it is possible to rehabilitate a certain proportion of persons through skillful application of the social case work method; and the new public agencies which were created during the depression under stimulation of federal emergency relief legislation, approached the task with personnel and methods borrowed from these agencies. In a few states the influence of emergency relief experience has been sufficiently marked to result in the actual repeal of the poor law and the enactment of modern public assistance legislation.[6] In England where the same influences have not been at work, there is little to soften the outmoded poor law practices so that new machinery such as the Unemployment Assistance Act has had to be devised to deal with the unemployed who exhaust their unemployment benefits. We have an unusual opportunity as social workers to make the most of this fluid period before public opinion is crystallized, by striving for a reorganization of poor law relief into modern public welfare services that are a part of a larger program of social security.

With this in mind the difference between a pension and a benefit is not as great as might be anticipated. Take, for example, the old age assistance and the old age benefit provisions of the Social Security Act. The pension is old age assistance in the form of a cash payment to an old person over sixty-five if he is in need whether or not he has previously been a worker; the annuity is old age benefit in the form of cash payment as a contractual right to all workers who have contributed in the past. It has been said that the pension is a concession and the annuity is a right.[7] Both are paid for by taxes but in the case of the annuity the tax is levied directly upon the recipient and his employer. Or to put it in another way, the benefit plan is really compulsory savings with insurance features for those who live long enough. The fact that the old age benefit scheme is wholly federal insures uniformity of coverage and of benefit scale for those coming under the Act. There are many straws in the wind, however, that indicate that old age pensions are coming to be regarded also as a right although this interpretation will come state by state. The law reads in the State of Washington "The amount and nature of old age assistance . . . together with the applicant's resources and income shall not be less than the sum of thirty dollars ($30) per month to each recipient. . ."[8] Here we have a minimum pension replacing the usual maximum pension. Gradually, also, state legislatures are

[5] A. J. Altmeyer, "Social Security and Social Insurance," an address delivered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, October 4, 1937 (mimeographed). Italics are the writer's.

[6] Washington Session Laws, 1937, chap. 180. Public assistance, administered and financed as "a joint responsibility" of state and local governments, is inclusive of all groups even "care of homeless unattached and non-resident" persons.

[7] Eveline M. Burns, "Toward Social Security," p. 15.

[8] Washington Session Laws, 1937, Chap. 156, section 4.

repealing the clause making relief a claim upon the recipient's property. The fact that the Social Security Act requires every state receiving a grant-in-aid for old age assistance to include a plan for appeal and hearing for those denied assistance is surely an indication of a move in the direction of regarding assistance as a right. Finally, with the number of aged in the population increasing at the present rate it may be expected that pressure groups of the aged will hasten this change in attitude toward public assistance as a right. The distinction between pension and annuity will then become less important and one will be considered without question as a supplement to the other.

The fact that an old age pension recipient must be in need is usually stressed as an important difference from old age benefit; but when one notes the scale of benefit for a worker who has contributed during his working years, it seems probable that a fair proportion of those collecting benefits at the age of sixty-five may have to find additional income from some source. If we are to believe the Brookings Institution report that in 1929 one-fifth of the wage-earners in the United States had an income of less than $1000 a year, and if an insured person with this annual income must work steadily and contribute for a period of thirty years to be entitled to an annuity of $23 a month provided he stops work at the age of sixty-five, it becomes evident that a man and his wife at that age may very well be considered in need, despite the income from the benefit payment.

When we examine unemployment compensation as outlined in the Social Security Act for state legislation, we find even more reason to believe that administration of social insurance and of public assistance should be related. The Act recognizes that unemployment is not a risk that is strictly predictable by using the term "compensation" rather than "insurance." The source of funds in all but eight states is from a tax on employers only. Cash benefits will be paid to workers when they are unemployed regardless of their means provided they have been employed for a certain period in the past. The agency through which benefits will be paid to the unemployed worker is the public employment office. Already, within two years of the enactment of the Social Security Act, every state and territory under the United States Government has provided for an unemployment compensation plan and a public employment service. By no means all states, however, recognize that public assistance for the able bodied unemployed not receiving unemployment benefits, is also an obligation of government. That recognition must come as experience with unemployment compensation reveals its limitations.

And unemployment compensation has serious limitations. Less than half the wage earners of the country are covered. While provisions vary from state to state, the Committee on Economic Security estimated that a three per cent payroll tax would yield enough money to pay each unemployed worker a benefit equal to fifty per cent of wages for about 12 weeks if benefits began after a waiting period of four weeks. That four weeks waiting period for the one-fifth of the wage earners who have an income of less than $1000 a year is likely to require a plan of supplementation before the benefit even begins. Moreover, the range of benefit is usually $5 to $15 a week, an amount quite inadequate often for a man with a family. In short, while unemployment compensation may be the "first line of defense" against want, it is important to build up the second line of defense, public assistance, in relation to the first. Human beings are not easily kept in categories. An employable man today may, through anxiety, become a borderline unemployable person tomorrow.

To dwell upon whether or not social workers shall be the administrators of social insurance programs seems to me beside the point. A visiting teacher employed by a school board is a social worker, nevertheless. Social insurance presents a new field of public service that demands a variety of kinds of knowledge and skill. The collection of payroll taxes, for example, will require an adaptation of knowledge on the part of accountants, statisticians and other experts who have been employed with tax commissions, commercial insurance companies, etc. The distribution of those taxes in the form of benefit payments to the aged and unemployed under certain conditions, is a problem in human relationships in which adaptations of the knowledge and skills possessed by social workers should play an important part. If we are intelligent enough to adapt our skills to this new field of public service the United States may avoid some of the mistakes and shortcomings of European systems.

To find evidence that the social insurances present problems of administration that lie within the area of competence of social workers, let us look at the Social Security Act itself. Unemployment benefits are to be paid "solely through public employment offices." While vocational guidance and placement have been regarded sometimes as border fields of social work they involve, according to the National Vocational Guidance Association, four fundamental principles, all of which will be recognized as common to social work; namely, recognition of individual differ-

ences, appreciation of the complexity of modern occupational life, recognition of the right of the individual to make his own choices, and the realization that the adjustment of an individual to his occupation is an ever-changing situation.[9] It is to be hoped, therefore, that preparation for public employment service positions will be regarded by schools of social work as within their province although such preparation requires a new combination of skills.

The interval between the time a worker is out of employment and the time his payment of benefit begins, the period of time during which he is receiving a benefit that may be too small for the support of his family, and the point at which the benefit is exhausted or he is placed back on the job are all times at which the services of a social worker may be important to the future independence of the worker. While every unemployed man may not need certain services a social worker can offer, it is safe to guess that a fair proportion will need vocational counselling and possibly vocational training if they are to keep pace with changing demands of industry. Ability to hold a job, as private industry has discovered, sometimes depends upon personal and family problems which interfere with the worker's efficiency. Counselling service should be available for this group. The government must pay the bill if it fails to keep the worker on the job so that an investment in personnel competent to analyse personal as well as economic factors in employment should pay dividends in the long run.

Most state laws contain a section on "disqualification for benefits" which prescribes protections required by the Federal Act and in addition, penalties for discharge for "misconduct," for leaving work "voluntarily without cause," for failing to apply for "available, suitable work without good cause." Here is an area in which interpretation of the indefinite terms of the law will need to be made by persons skilled in investigation and understanding of human behavior. Students in schools of social work not infrequently ask why the kinds of services a social worker offers are not available to other than low income groups. Private agencies, now that public social agencies are relieving them of the bulk of relief, are experimenting here and there with part-pay services. Is it not reasonable to expect that personal and family counselling service might be welcomed by aged and unemployed persons if the service were made a part of the administration of unemployment and old age insurances and if "relief" were dissociated from the service?

Great possibilities of vocational guidance and training are opened up by the employment services in the forty-eight states. Instead of payment of benefit being administered as an end in itself, efforts should be made to keep the beneficiary "on his own." If all efforts fail and he must receive public assistance, the relationship between insurance and public assistance should be viewed as mutually complementary. We may have to do less "rehabilitation" in the administration of public assistance if we do more during the period the person is under insurance. The opportunity is ours to apply old skills, with variations, to new tasks.

[9] Quoted in "Vocational Guidance in Action," by John A. Fitch, p. 11.

## TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH LEE

The Massachusetts Civic League, in a memorial edition of its publication *The Lens,* paid a tribute to the late Joseph Lee, president emeritus and founder of the League, "in deeply grateful and appreciative recognition of the devoted and fruitful service to human causes throughout the years of his life." The memorial edition was made up of quotations from various published articles of the founder. Mr. Lee was born in 1862 and was a graduate of Harvard Law School. He was a member of the AASW.

*"We can look forward to little diminution of the present load of dependency unless some radical change occurs in the functioning of our economic system. Upon its proper solution hangs in large measure the well-being of American society, and herein lies the crux both of the social worker's responsibility and opportunity. His special contribution will come in its treatment. Although the determination of its cause and cure will very likely rest in other hands, the social worker must equip himself to assist in dealing with the broader issues if he is to retain his prestige in his own particular field. This points to the need of the broadest kind of training of those who expect to enter the profession."*

—Excerpt from "Responsibility of the Social Worker in the Changing Social Order." Maurice Taylor, Pittsburgh.

# What Is the Merit System?

The President of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare Raises Some Pertinent Questions and Supplies the Answers.*

By WILLIAM W. BURKE

QUESTION is sometimes raised as to what is "the merit system," which has been endorsed by this and other associations, with the implication that it means one thing to one person and something else to the next.

Governor Yates of Illinois said in 1903 that he was in sympathy with the advocates of a statute for a reasonable merit system, but stated "we already have the merit system without a statute because, not only in the charitable institutions but in all branches of the state government, merit or fitness has been the largest consideration in the making of appointments." Yet it was at the close of his administration that certain wards of the state hospital at Kankakee, which Miss Lathrop had seen in 1893 when it was one of the foremost mental hospitals in the United States, were said by her to be in worse condition than those of a poor-house and a very ordinary poorhouse at that. This condition she, speaking out of the knowledge and experience in the welfare field that made her later an extraordinarily effective administrator of the Federal Children's Bureau, attributed to the domination of the spoils system. It is true that misconceptions exist as to the merit system, and that certain latitude is permissible in defining it. However, there is no doubt but that there is substantial agreement among informed persons as to what it is.

### Merit System Defined

The merit system (adopting a definition used recently in Pennsylvania) may be defined as: "a system of personnel management for the civilian employees of the government in which employment, compensation, promotion, demotion and discharge are based upon merit and merit alone." Thus the term has come to have a much broader and more positive meaning than was indicated by the slogan of the early civil service reformers: "Keep the rascals out!"

More specifically the merit system includes certain devices which have been found in practice to have value in handling the employment, compensation, promotion, demotion and discharge of public employees. Some of the more important will be mentioned.

### Classification of Positions

One is the classification of positions, including the allocation on a logical basis of duties among various grades of positions, the formulation of the qualifications of education, training, experience and personal traits which are required to perform the duties competently, and the determination of equitable compensation so that on the one hand the government does not waste its funds and on the other that it does not impair the morale of its employees by showing favoritism among them. Any particular political or religious affiliation or any particular place of residence should be excluded from the qualifications so determined.

### Recruiting and Testing

Another procedure of the merit system is ingenious recruiting of well qualified persons as candidates for positions.

Another is the testing of the qualifications of candidates so that only the best qualified for the position in question may be chosen. The so-called unassembled examination has been found most useful in filling positions requiring considerable ability. In unassembled examinations the candidates' general education, technical education and experience are systematically rated by analyzing evidence which can be made available on these points; the candidates' knowledge may be further rated through a written examination. A mistake made by many persons is to suppose that written examinations constitute the only resource of the merit system in employing workers; however, a written examination may be used in connection with the other evaluations that have been mentioned or it may be dispensed with entirely; intangible personal attributes, where these are important, should be rated through an oral examination. In the testing of candidates, especially those who are being considered for positions involving complicated duties, the authorities in charge should avail themselves of the assistance of qualified workers in the particular vocation concerned, both in the selection of tests and in the rating of the

* Reprinted from "Building a Better State" with author's permission.

qualifications of the applicants. Appointments should be made from among the names at the top of the list of those given a satisfactory rating without regard to political affiliation. Appointments should be considered provisional in nature until the person selected has shown his ability to perform the duties of the position during a probationary period.

### Other Procedures

Policies regarding advancement in salary, promotion and demotion should be such as to give incentive to the employee to give good service.

Systematic effort should be made to train workers on the job so as to increase their value to the service, and to help them prepare for more responsible positions.

Tenure should depend on the acceptable performance of duties, not partisan political considerations. Workers unable to perform their duties acceptably should be resolutely separated from the service but only after their inadequacies have been brought to their attention and after definite efforts have been made to assist them to make good their deficiencies. It may be added that it is a mistake to suppose, as many frequently do, that inefficient employees are not removed under a well ordered civil service system; too often, due largely to public indifference, what has passed for civil service is not worthy of the name, either in regard to employment or discharge.

Finally, workers should not be subject to political assessments, and should be free to vote as their consciences dictate.

Such devices and procedures, if substantially in effect, constitute the merit system. Broadly speaking, if many of them are absent, the merit system does not prevail.

### Merit System Possible Without Civil Service Statute

It should be pointed out that, while such procedures may be required by statute, and while a civil service statute is of assistance in instituting them and in their effective functioning, such a statute is not indispensable to the merit system. The presence of a civil service statute does not necessarily produce a merit system because much depends on how the statute is administered. Most of these procedures (except to the extent that the use of some of them may be prohibited by existing laws) can be used by administrative authorities who wish to do so, and who are supported by public opinion, even in the absence of a civil service statute.

## WASHINGTON, D. C., CHAPTER PROGRAM

Public Social Work in the District of Columbia is the general topic around which the Washington, D. C. Chapter has built a program of nine meetings for the year 1937-38. The program as outlined by Chairman Elwood Street is as follows:

OCTOBER 12—The Development of Public Social Work and the Relationship of Public and Private Social Work.

*Speaker:* Miss Katharine Lenroot, Chief, Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor.

NOVEMBER 9—Function of Federal, State and Local Authorities.

*Speaker:* Mr. Lewis Meriam, Brookings Institution.

DECEMBER 14—Speaker on the Functions and Relationship of Public and Private Agencies Within the District of Columbia.

Report from Committee on the subject on which Mr. Meriam spoke on November 9.

JANUARY 11—Speaker on Personnel — Qualifications for Selection and Training Including Civil Service Classifications.

Report from Committee on Functions and Relationship of Public and Private Agencies within the District of Columbia.

FEBRUARY 8—Speaker on Personnel Policies.

Report from Committee on Personnel—Qualifications for Selection and Training Including Civil Service Classifications.

MARCH 8—Speaker on Responsibility and Methods of Interpretation.

Report from Committee on Personnel Policies.

APRIL 12—Report on Responsibility and Methods of Interpretation.

Possibly report from first committee, The Development of Public Social Work and the Relationship of Public and Private Social Work.

MAY 10—Report of other Special Committees of the Chapter.

JUNE 14—Annual Meeting and Election of Officers.

The entire membership of the Chapter has been invited to serve on one or more of these committees and the following additional committees: Committee on Group Work Technique; Committee on Legislation; Committee on Case Work Technique; Round Table on Housing; and the Committee on Fun; whose function is to provide about fifteen minutes of entertainment at each Chapter meeting. To date about one-third of the membership of the Chapter have signified the committees on which they wish to serve.

**Delegate Conference Seattle, Wash., June 23, 24, 25, 1938**

# Looking Backward 1925-1937

## The Secretary of the New Orleans Chapter Scans the Record of Twelve Years Activities.

By LEOLA DRAGON

THE New Orleans Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers received its charter on May 15, 1925, four years after the formation of the National Association. The petition asking for a charter was signed by the following fifteen members, who became charter members of the chapter: Elizabeth Gitt, Leon Volmer, Charles H. Patterson, David Fichman, Sherman Conrad, Laura Bachman, Cordelle Kemper, Mary L. Railey, Mary F. Reiley, Mignon O'Donnell, Irene Farnham Conrad, L. Edward Lashman, G. P. Wyckoff, Catherine Mathews, Mathilde Godchaux.

During these twelve years the chapter has slowly but steadily increased its membership to its present total of 161 members, representing twenty-one social agencies. More important still, there has been an accompanying growth in professional stature which is, of course, not so easily measured but is fairly obvious to any of the older members who recall the early chapter meetings and activities and to anyone who has had an opportunity to glance through the records of those first years. The minutes of the chapter in the first few years of its existence seem not to have been preserved, which fact in itself proves that the early period was more or less informal. Through the cooperation of the national office, we have been able to get some records of the earliest activities of the chapter.

We find that Mr. Arthur Strawson, Chairman of the National Membership Committee, met with the local members of the American Association of Social Workers in April, 1925, and discussed membership requirements. It was at this meeting that the application for a charter was proposed and the petition signed. Mr. L. Edward Lashman was elected Chairman and Mignon O'Donnell Secretary. On May 5th the chapter met again, at the home of the Chairman. A program for the year was outlined by Dr. Fichman, Chairman of the Program Committee. Mr. Bradley Buell was appointed as Chairman of the Committee to study "Labor Turn-over in Social Work in New Orleans." A study of the "Ethics of Other Professions as Practiced in New Orleans," under Father Wynhoven, was planned, and a study of the "Facilities in New Orleans for Reading and Research in Social Work," with Miss Catherine Mathews as Chairman, completed the study program. At the meeting on May 21st, there was much discussion in regard to bringing in new members. Twenty persons attended the meeting, and it was planned that a breakfast would be arranged for the members of the New Orleans Chapter, and others interested, at the Denver National Conference. Mr. Leon Volmer was appointed to make the arrangements.

The chapter planned to have a paper read at each meeting, followed by general discussion, and one book a month reviewed and discussed. At the meeting on May 5, 1925, Mrs. Conrad read a paper on "Evaluation of Social Work," which, the minutes state, was followed by a lively discussion. On May 21st, Harry Ginsberg read a paper on the "Care of the Child as the Most Important Part of Our Work." Miss Gitt, of the Child Welfare Association, opened the discussion. A review of the book "How Foster Children Turn Out" was given by Mr. Lashman.

For a period of two years there is a gap in the records, but we assume that the chapter continued meeting, since material on file for 1927, the year the Tulane School of Social Work was accredited by the American Association of Schools of Social Work, shows the chapter, through its Committee on Education, very busy working with Tulane on many problems of mutual concern to social workers and to the school, such as recruiting, curriculum, research, field work and the placement of students. The fact that this committee was asked to serve the school in an advisory capacity was a big step forward in the chapter's professional growth.

This cooperative relationship between the chapter and the school was strengthened during the next two years, and 1928 saw another committee, on "Relationship Between Hospital Social Service Departments and Other Case Work Agencies," actively concerned with problems of function. The one set of minutes preserved from this year records a report from this committee. For 1929, the minutes show an awakening concern with committee work and a more formal organization of chapter activities with committees appointed on Finance, Membership, Program and Education. Discussions at meetings were being given wider scope with more emphasis on social legislation, interpretation of social work and education.

The year 1930 saw still further advances in chapter organization and professional development which were fostered by a well-planned program

for the year, designed chiefly to encourage a closer relationship between the chapter and the "organizations in the city concerned with social projects." Speakers for the year were selected from a wide range of fields with the hope that there might grow out of these meetings "committees composed of members of American Association of Social Workers and members of these groups" and that such committees "may work cooperatively on projects of mutual concern and interest." Activity was centered chiefly in the Committee on Social Legislation. An active campaign for membership was inaugurated and the Membership Committee was held responsible for attendance at meetings.

Meetings in 1931 and 1932 were largely devoted to the tremendous problems growing out of the relief program and the chapter began to make itself heard locally by means of the publicity given its resolutions and action along these lines. At the same time, the membership became more articulate in urging support of the new social legislation through direct contacts with the state's representatives in Congress. Along with these more vital matters, there was a gradually increasing awareness of the chapter's role as a growing force in the community and a new spirit of professionalism can be detected in the minutes and reports for this period. Interest in a study of membership requirements and standards was high and the plan for group annuities for workers met with enthusiastic interest.

In 1933 and 1934, the chapter was even more deeply engrossed in the business of relief. Several meetings were given over to the committees formed to study the seven points under consideration at the Conference on Governmental Objectives in Social Work. Every relief crisis brought on heated gatherings of the chapter. The Legislative Committee spent a busy year sponsoring the ratification of the Child Labor Amendment and Wagner-Lewis Bill. The chapter was active in stimulating interest in an ordinance for the creation of the New Orleans Department of Public Welfare and later, in order to clarify functions of the respective relief agencies, a chapter meeting was devoted to a panel discussion on the "Division of Responsibility Between the Emergency Relief Administration, Department of Public Welfare and private agencies."

Although relief was the keynote of the year, chapter committees had time to make a salary study, to report on the strides being made toward certification, to debate the need of a Social Worker's Code of Ethics, and to participate very actively in considering with the national association standards for approved technical social work courses.

Again in 1935, problems of the relief program held the center of the stage and we find the chapter protesting against federal relief policies and against the state's lethargy in failing to assume its responsibilities. A "Committee on Immediate Action" planned a public meeting to present the reasons for urging Washington to continue relief. Later, this committee planned to attack the problem on three fronts; namely, local, state and federal, and a publicity campaign was launched giving case material designed to bring before the public an idea of what was happening to the people because of existing relief conditions. These clippings were sent to local, state and federal relief officials, with a covering letter explaining the situation. At the same time, a resolution was sent to the governor urging him to call a special session of the legislature for the purpose of repealing those recently enacted statutes which prevented the spending of federal funds in Louisiana.

The Program Committee experimented with a new plan in that year, the objective being to give all members a voice in the selection of a program and to encourage a wider participation in chapter activities. It was hoped that the chapter might become a forum for the younger group, particularly, and with this thought in mind committees were chosen from the younger members. The program chosen was "A Study of the Existing Program of Social Welfare in Louisiana and New Orleans, giving special consideration to the gaps, the effects of the federal social security legislation on the present situation, the advantages to be derived from federal grants-in-aid, if Louisiana had proper legislation, and a general statement of what that legislation should be." Later, a committee was named to study the recommendations for social legislation made by the original committees and to bring in a plan for a general legislative program.

The program for 1935 carried over into the first part of 1936 and the chapter continued to study the state's welfare needs in the light of the social security program, and with representatives from the Council of Social Agencies and State Conference approached the governor to discuss the welfare bill. At the last meeting of the chapter year, the Findings Committee reviewed the year's program and discussed the new social legislation adopted by the Louisiana legislature. As a result of this committee's recommendation, a permanent chapter committee on legislation was set up for the purpose of cooperating with social agencies in the promotion of legislation affecting social work. Another highlight of this meeting was an announcement regarding the newly set up State Department of Public Welfare and the fact that the chapter's assistance was sought in securing a qualified personnel. At the same time the chap-

ter was working with the national organization to urge federal grants-in-aid and a joint program for federal, state and local units. Again the chapter was vociferously protesting relief reductions and contacting local, state and federal officials to make its recommendations. During this year, newspaper publicity was used whenever possible for purposes of interpretation.

On July 1, 1936, the New Orleans Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers was a strong, active professional organization making its influence felt in the community program.

**Chapter High Points, 1936-1937**

The chapter program for 1936-37 was planned with two functions in mind; namely, to draw as much of the entire membership as possible into active participation and to follow the work of the committees of the national association. Six major committees were set up: Government and Social Work; Professional Standards; Employment Practices; Housing; Differential Approach in Case Work Treatment, and Social Work Interpretation. In addition to these committees, the Executive Committee adopted the policy of delegating a good share of the work of the chapter to additional committees which it set up and on which our younger members were well represented.

At the first meeting of the chapter a new constitution was adopted. This constitution was a step in advance as it did away with the advisory committee selected by the chairman by providing for the election of an Executive Committee with overlapping terms; and put the chapter on a twelve month basis.

The November meeting was given over to plans for a public lecture by Dr. Alice Salomon which the chapter would sponsor as a means of interpreting the chapter to the community and at the same time providing a stimulating program for the chapter. At this time, interest in professional standards was high, as evidenced by the report of the Rating Committee of the Department of Public Welfare, which committee was serving as an unofficial rating committee to evaluate the applications of workers applying for positions to the New Orleans Department of Public Welfare, to establish qualifications covering the education and experience of the social work personnel and to describe the duties of each position established in the Department.

The December meeting was the lecture by Dr. Alice Salomon and the committee appointed to arrange the lecture did a really professional piece of interpretation of the chapter.

The Committee on Differential Approach in Case Work Treatment furnished the program for the January meeting, which consisted of a presentation and discussion of Miss Hollis' article, "Some Contributions of Therapy to Generalized Case Work."

The highlight of the February meeting was a discussion of "The Statement Regarding Employment Practices," which appeared in the January, 1937, *Compass*. The points were presented by the Committee on Employment Practices and after a lengthy and spirited debate the membership voted to charge the committee with a survey of public and private social agencies in order to secure the facts regarding local employment practices and to make in addition a survey of the workers in these agencies in order to obtain their opinion of these employment practices along with their suggestions as to change.

In March, the delegates to the Delegate Conference reported back to the chapter. The first delegate covered the general plan of the conference, the discussion devoted to current relief problems, the presidential address and a summary of Miss Kahn's paper, "Some Professional Questions About Relief." The second delegate discussed the obligation of social workers to carry on social action as a professional function and administration as a professional function. A committee was appointed to participate in a study of Cooperative Relationships Between Medical and Non-Medical Social Agencies.

The April meeting was devoted to the chapter's participation in the coming State Conference of Social Welfare and to a report from the Committee on Professional Standards. Mr. Arne, Deputy Commissioner, Louisiana Department of Public Welfare, discussed certain aspects of the state's social security program. The discussion which followed showed the chapter's recognition of its responsibility in problems involving professional personnel.

In place of a regular meeting in May, the chapter arranged a breakfast during the State Conference that was attended by members of the American Association of Social Workers throughout the state. Mrs. Conrad, Director of Public Assistance and Child Welfare, State Department of Public Welfare, described the growth and development of the New Orleans Chapter.

Since another crisis in the long line of relief catastrophies is upon us, the June meeting was given over to a general discussion of its effect upon clients and local agencies, with the hope that some definite action from the chapter will be forthcoming.

Looking back, one cannot help but be impressed by the growth of the chapter, not only in numbers but in professional stature. The Executive Committee hopes that this review of chapter activities will awaken an even deeper spirit of professionalism and stimulate the membership to still more active participation in the local scene.

## Professional School Developments 1937-38

*The following report of activities at the Atlanta School of Social Work was received too late for inclusion in the November issue of The Compass which devoted several columns to a summary report of developments in professional schools.*

The Atlanta School of Social Work began on September 27th its eighteenth year of training young men and women for the profession of social work and its third year as a graduate institution.

The enrollment represents students from a widely scattered area. Twenty-four states from Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska and Rhode Island to Florida, Louisiana and Texas, as well as the District of Columbia and South Africa, and thirty-three leading colleges and universities, from institutions as far North as Marquette at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, the University of Kansas at Lawrence to institutions as far south as Dillard University at New Orleans, La., and Talladega College at Talladega, Alabama, are represented by these young people.

Because of the shift in auspices from private to public social work, Forrester B. Washington, director, announced that field work under public auspices is being afforded students of the school in the following local public agencies: The Atlanta (Fulton County) Department of Public Welfare in case work; the University Homes, a large government low cost Housing Project, in community organization and the Butler Street and South Atlanta NYA Community Centers in group work. The school has also, as usual, placed its students for field work with the following private agencies: Atlanta Tuberculosis Association, Child Welfare Association of Fulton and DeKalb Counties, the Butler Street YMCA, the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, the Atlanta Urban League, the Gate City Day Nursery, and the Atlanta Family Welfare Society, which organization no longer acts as a coverage agency for all types of family maladjustments, but only for those cases in which the major problem is psychiatric or which requires a psychiatric approach.

Miss Frank V. Adams, who was on leave of absence, during which time she obtained her Master's degree, will direct the activities of the Group Work and Community Organization Departments.

The School has awarded Mrs. Ethel Maxwell, assistant head of the Case Work Department, a fellowship making possible a year's study toward an advanced degree at the University of Minnesota.

An addition to the part-time faculty is that of Mr. Frank Miller, former director of the Fulton County, Georgia, Department of Public Welfare, who will present the course on Public Welfare Administration.

## ARKANSAS CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

Several vacanies in the child welfare division of the Arkansas Public Welfare Department will be filled through unassembled civil service examinations, according to a bulletin recently received from the Arkansas State Personnel Division.

The positions include both those of case workers in field units and supervising case work consultants. Residence within the state is not required for competition. Salaries range from $1200 to $1800 per year, with added allowance for travel expense.

Full details concerning the examination may be had by writing immediately to the Arkansas State Personnel Division, Capitol Building, Little Rock, Arkansas. A large self-addressed envelope should be enclosed, together with ten cents in postage to cover mailing cost.

## SPECIAL MEDICAL GROUP STATEMENT

The Committee of Physicians—"a self-appointed group of medical men"—has issued a statement containing four principles and nine proposals which they believe "should govern needed efforts to improve medical care whether made by voluntary or governmental agencies, local, state or federal." The statement, which is signed by 430 physicians and surgeons, is based on acceptance of the principle that the health of the people is the direct concern of the government. It was formulated "in the hope that they (the principles and proposals) may receive the consideration of the national government and of medical organizations" to which they have been submitted. John P. Peters, M.D., is secretary of the committee. Copies of the proposal can be secured by writing to 789 Howard Avenue, New Haven, Conn.

*"The American Association of Social Workers represents the interest of those who are practicing in this field to increase the effectiveness of social work. The Association constitutes the social workers' own auspices through which practice can be communicated, technical knowledge can be extended, and policy can be formulated for the larger purposes of the field and the community."*

WALTER WEST.

# MEMBERS OF NATIONAL COMMITTEES AND DIVISIONS 1937-1938

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE — *Elected*

*1937 - 1938*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| PRESIDENT | Linton B. Swift | New York City |
| FIRST VICE PRESIDENT | Harry Greenstein | Baltimore, Maryland |
| SECOND VICE PRESIDENT | Martha A. Chickering | Berkeley, California |
| THIRD VICE PRESIDENT | Grace Abbott | Chicago, Illinois |
| SECRETARY | Leah Feder | St. Louis, Missouri |
| TREASURER | Frederick I. Daniels | Albany, New York |

*Term Ending 1938*

| | |
|---|---|
| Joseph P. Tufts | Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania |
| Florence M. Mason | Cleveland, Ohio |
| Mary A. Howell | Richmond, Virginia |

*Term Ending 1939*

| | |
|---|---|
| Ewan Clague | Washington, D. C. |
| Pierce Atwater | St. Paul, Minnesota |
| Malcolm Nichols | Boston, Massachusetts |

*Term Ending 1940*

| | |
|---|---|
| Ruth Blakeslee | Washington, D. C. |
| Herschel Alt | St. Louis, Missouri |
| Fern Lowry | New York City |

## COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Nominating Committee* | Betsey Libbey | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania |
| *National Membership Committee* | Florence Sytz | New Orleans, Louisiana |
| *Division on Government and Social Work* | Dorothy C. Kahn | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania |
| *Division on Personnel Standards* | Grace F. Marcus | New York City |
| *Division on Employment Practices* | Lillian Adler | Chicago, Illinois |
| *Committee on Conference Program* | Peter Kasius | St. Louis, Missouri |
| *Committee on Chapter Organization and Programs* | Margaret Wagner | Cleveland, Ohio |

## AD INTERIM COMMITTEE

Linton B. Swift
Harry Greenstein
Betsey Libbey
Frederick I. Daniels
Dorothy C. Kahn
Fern Lowry
Grace F. Marcus

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE — *Elected*

Betsey Libbey, *Chairman*..Philadelphia, Pa.

| | |
|---|---|
| Florence Hollis.....Cleveland, Ohio | Mary A. Stanton.....Los Angeles, Calif. |
| Arlien Johnson.....Seattle, Wash. | James E. Stuart.....Cincinnati, Ohio |

## NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Florence Sytz, *Chairman*..New Orleans, La.

| | |
|---|---|
| Esther Beckenstein.....Chicago, Ill. | Mrs. Jane Judge.....New York City |
| May Brocker.....Minneapolis, Minn. | Rhoda Kaufman.....Atlanta, Ga. |
| Lucia Clow.....Milwaukee, Wis. | Ruth E. Lewis.....St. Louis, Mo. |
| Grace Dicks.....Cleveland, Ohio | Rita F. O'Grady.....Toledo, Ohio |
| Marjorie Embry.....Houston, Tex. | Marguerite Whiting.....Detroit, Mich. |
| Mrs. Ruby S. Inlow.....Indianapolis, Ind. | Frances Wilson.....Iowa City, Iowa |
| Margaret Woll.....Frankfort, Ky. | |

## DIVISION ON GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL WORK

Dorothy C. Kahn, *Chairman*.....Philadelphia, Pa.

Ada M. Barker.....Atlanta, Ga.
C. M. Bookman.....Cincinnati, Ohio
Mrs. Isabelle K. Carter...Chapel Hill, N. C.
Helen M. Crosby.....New York City
Frederick I. Daniels.....Albany, N. Y.
Stanley P. Davies.....New York City
William J. Ellis.....Trenton, N. J.
Charles F. Ernst.....Olympia, Wash.
Anita J. Faatz.....Baltimore, Md.
Benjamin Glassberg.....Milwaukee, Wis.
Alvin R. Guyler.....Philadelphia, Pa.
Mrs. Judith H. Gresham..Montgomery, Ala.
William Hodson.....New York City
Fred K. Hoehler.....Chicago, Ill.
Donald S. Howard.....New York City
Margaret Johnson.....Cleveland, Ohio
Robert T. Lansdale.....New York City
Esther Lazarus.....Baltimore, Md.
Wayne McMillen.....Chicago, Ill.
Harold Silver.....Detroit, Mich.
Frances Taussig.....New York City
Lea D. Taylor.....Chicago, Ill.
Mrs. Edith M. Tufts.....Pittsburgh, Pa.
Conrad Van Hyning.....New York City

## DIVISION ON PERSONNEL STANDARDS

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Dorothy Baldwin.....New York City
Harriett Bartlett.....Cambridge, Mass.
Elizabeth Cosgrove.....Washington, D. C.
Grace Coyle.....Cleveland, Ohio
Florence Day.....Cleveland, Ohio
Pauline Gollub.....Detroit, Mich.
Ruth Lloyd.....Cambridge, Mass.
Leona E. Massoth.....Indianapolis, Ind.
Mrs. Martha Maltman Perry.New York City
Jeannette Regensburg .....New York City
Harriett Rinaldo.....Philadelphia, Pa.
Ruth Smalley.....Chicago, Ill.
Florence Sytz.....New Orleans, La.
Agnes Van Driel.....Washington, D. C.

## DIVISION ON EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Lillian Adler, *Chairman*.....Chicago, Ill.

Ruth Bartlett.....Springfield, Ill.
Metta Bean.....Milwaukee, Wis.
Mrs. Linn Brandenburg.....Chicago, Ill.
Elizabeth Munro Clarke...Indianapolis, Ind.
Blanche Ferguson.....Denver, Colo.
Helen I. Fisk.....New York City
Lester Gerber.....Lincoln, Neb.
L. Genevieve Griffin.....Toledo, Ohio
Virgil W. Hall.....Sioux City, Iowa
Helen E. Hayden.....St. Paul, Minn.
Mrs. Dorothy Jewett.....Des Moines, Iowa
Alice R. McCabe.....St. Louis, Mo.
Frieda Romalis.....St. Louis, Mo.
Marion Russell.....Chicago, Ill.
Freda Seigworth.....Cleveland, Ohio
Helaine A. Todd.....Philadelphia, Pa.
Claudia Wannamaker.....Chicago, Ill.
Cecile Whalen.....Detroit, Mich.

## COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Peter Kasius, *Chairman*.....St. Louis, Mo.

Robert W. Beasley.....Denver, Colo.
Mrs. Irene F. Conrad.....Houston, Tex.
Elizabeth H. Dexter.....New York City
Mrs. Elinor R. Hixenbaugh.Columbus, Ohio
Mrs. Edwina M. Lewis.....Chicago, Ill.
C. Whit Pfeiffer.....Kansas City, Mo.
Rose Porter.....Salt Lake City, Utah
Reuben B. Resnik.....San Francisco, Calif.
Clare M. Tousley.....New York City
Esther E. Twente.....Topeka, Kan.

## COMMITTEE ON CHAPTER ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAMS

Margaret Wagner, *Chairman*.....Cleveland, Ohio

Mrs. Florence Booth.....Detroit, Mich.
Mrs. Everett R. Castle.....Cleveland, Ohio
Esther M. Hilton.....Rochester, N. Y.
Ellery E. Kelley.....Mitchell, S. D.
Mrs. Marion Kreiner....Minneapolis, Minn.
Agnes McCreery.....Iowa City, Iowa
Leona E. Massoth.....Indianapolis, Ind.
Margaret C. Miller.....Pittsburgh, Pa.
Mrs. Norma Y. Queen.....Denver, Colo.
Leon H. Richman.....Chicago, Ill.
Mrs. Edith Dumont Smith.....Omaha, Neb.
Mrs. Anna Budd Ware.....Cincinnati, Ohio
Mrs. Louise R. Wood.....Louisville, Ky.

## CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP COUNT

Herewith is the official count of members by chapters taken each year. (Prior to 1937 this count was taken in January.) This count establishes the basis for representation at the Association Delegate Conference and for budget estimates. No other official count is taken during the year and the responsibility rests with the chapters for keeping up to date the list of members sent to them at the beginning of each year.

### CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP COUNT

as of October 9, 1937

| | Junior | Senior | Total | Total by State |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alabama State Chapter | 15 | 29 | 44 | 44 |
| Arizona State Chapter | 9 | 12 | 21 | 21 |
| Arkansas State Chapter | 6 | 22 | 28 | 28 |
| California | | | | 806 |
| California Council | 3 | 20 | 23 | |
| Los Angeles County Chapter | 64 | 380 | 444 | |
| Northern California Chapter | 31 | 253 | 284 | |
| San Diego Chapter | 7 | 48 | 55 | |
| Colorado | | | | 159 |
| Colorado Springs Chapter | 1 | 10 | 11 | |
| Denver Chapter | 51 | 90 | 141 | |
| Non chapter | 3 | 4 | 7 | |
| Connecticut State Chapter | 4 | 216 | 220 | 220 |
| Delaware State Chapter | — | 26 | 26 | 26 |
| Washington, D. C., Chapter | 22 | 294 | 316 | 316 |
| Florida State Chapter | 12 | 45 | 57 | 57 |
| Georgia State Chapter | 11 | 100 | 111 | 111 |
| Hawaii Chapter | 1 | 43 | 44 | 44 |
| Idaho | 1 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Illinois | | | | 963 |
| Chicago Chapter | 178 | 714 | 892 | |
| Illinois State Chapter | 12 | 59 | 71 | |
| Indiana | | | | 157 |
| Indianapolis Chapter | 22 | 100 | 122 | |
| Non chapter | 13 | 22 | 35 | |
| Iowa State Chapter | 38 | 97 | 135 | 135 |
| Kansas | | | | 56 |
| Topeka Chapter | 4 | 14 | 18 | |
| Wichita Chapter | — | 17 | 17 | |
| Non chapter | 4 | 17 | 21 | |
| Kentucky State Chapter | 29 | 87 | 116 | 116 |
| Louisiana | | | | 196 |
| Louisiana State Chapter | 9 | 20 | 29 | |
| New Orleans Chapter | 37 | 130 | 167 | |
| Maine | 1 | 15 | 16 | 16 |
| Maryland State Chapter | 7 | 175 | 182 | 182 |
| Massachusetts | | | | 369 |
| Boston Chapter | 5 | 250 | 255 | |
| Southeastern Mass. Chapter | 3 | 29 | 32 | |
| Western Mass. Chapter | 2 | 45 | 47 | |
| Worcester Chapter | 4 | 31 | 35 | |
| Michigan | | | | 380 |
| Michigan Council | 8 | 35 | 43 | |
| Detroit Chapter | 30 | 249 | 279 | |
| Grand Rapids Chapter | 2 | 20 | 22 | |
| Kalamazoo Chapter | 3 | 7 | 10 | |
| Lansing Chapter | 1 | 25 | 26 | |
| Minnesota | | | | 370 |
| Arrowhead Chapter | 10 | 14 | 24 | |
| Twin City Chapter | 87 | 246 | 333 | |
| Non chapter | 2 | 11 | 13 | |
| Mississippi | 1 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Missouri | | | | 457 |
| Kansas City Chapter | 5 | 77 | 82 | |
| St. Louis Chapter | 57 | 257 | 314 | |
| Non chapter | 23 | 38 | 61 | |
| Montana | 4 | 8 | 12 | 12 |
| Nebraska State Chapter | 24 | 46 | 70 | 70 |
| Nevada | 1 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| New Hampshire | 1 | 10 | 11 | 11 |
| New Jersey State Chapter | 16 | 222 | 238 | 238 |
| New Mexico | 3 | 6 | 9 | 9 |
| New York | | | | 1742 |
| New York State Council | 6 | 54 | 60 | |
| Buffalo Chapter | 15 | 141 | 156 | |
| Fort Orange Chapter | 4 | 64 | 68 | |
| Hudson Valley Chapter | 2 | 29 | 31 | |
| New York City Chapter | 59 | 1209 | 1268 | |
| Rochester Chapter | 11 | 100 | 111 | |
| Syracuse Chapter | 10 | 38 | 48 | |
| North Carolina State Chapter | 12 | 43 | 55 | 55 |
| North Dakota | 7 | 6 | 13 | 13 |
| Ohio | | | | 943 |
| Ohio Council | 9 | 53 | 62 | |
| Akron Chapter | 1 | 34 | 35 | |
| Cincinnati Chapter | 12 | 173 | 185 | |
| Cleveland Chapter | 99 | 374 | 473 | |
| Columbus Chapter | 13 | 73 | 86 | |
| Dayton Chapter | 4 | 41 | 45 | |
| Toledo Chapter | 5 | 52 | 57 | |
| Oklahoma State Chapter | 24 | 38 | 62 | 62 |
| Oregon State Chapter | 22 | 59 | 81 | 81 |
| Pennsylvania | | | | 947 |
| Pennsylvania Division | 9 | 43 | 52 | |
| Erie Chapter | 4 | 29 | 33 | |
| Harrisburg Chapter | 1 | 50 | 51 | |
| Lehigh Valley Chapter | 2 | 23 | 25 | |
| Northeastern Penna. Chapter | — | 43 | 43 | |
| Philadelphia Chapter | 15 | 386 | 401 | |
| Pittsburgh Chapter | 94 | 228 | 322 | |
| Reading Chapter | 1 | 19 | 20 | |
| Puerto Rico Chapter | 4 | 15 | 19 | 19 |
| Rhode Island State Chapter | 6 | 82 | 88 | 88 |
| South Carolina State Chapter | 7 | 25 | 32 | 32 |
| South Dakota State Chapter | 12 | 8 | 20 | 20 |
| Tennessee | | | | 66 |
| Tennessee Division | — | 18 | 18 | |
| Memphis Chapter | — | 23 | 23 | |
| Nashville Chapter | 5 | 20 | 25 | |
| Texas | | | | 164 |
| North Texas Chapter | 9 | 45 | 54 | |
| Southeast Texas Chapter | 10 | 48 | 58 | |
| South Texas | 5 | 37 | 42 | |
| Non chapter | 3 | 7 | 10 | |
| Utah State Chapter | 7 | 25 | 32 | 32 |
| Vermont | 1 | 8 | 9 | 9 |
| Virginia | | | | 158 |
| Lynchburg-Roanoke Chapter | 2 | 17 | 19 | |
| Richmond Chapter | 13 | 95 | 108 | |
| Non chapter | 6 | 25 | 31 | |
| Washington | | | | 188 |
| Central Washington Chapter | 8 | 11 | 19 | |
| Seattle-Tacoma Chapter | 43 | 94 | 137 | |
| Non chapter | 10 | 22 | 32 | |
| West Virginia | 10 | 13 | 23 | 23 |
| Wisconsin | | | | 182 |
| Madison Chapter | 4 | 33 | 37 | |
| Milwaukee Chapter | 7 | 107 | 114 | |
| Non chapter | 6 | 25 | 31 | |
| Wyoming | 1 | — | 1 | 1 |
| Canada | — | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Foreign | — | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Bad Addresses | 3 | 5 | 8 | 8 |
| | 1510 | 8918 | 10432 | 10432* |

* Includes 4 Guest Members. (Chicago 1; New York 1; Cincinnati 1; Seattle-Tacoma 1.)

**Delegate Conference Seattle, Wash., June 23, 24, 25, 1938**

# Here and There

**RELIEF NEEDS** during 1938 was one of the important subjects on the agenda of the United States Conference of Mayors, November 15 to 17, in Washington.

Mayor Rossi of San Francisco said that the stoppage of the federal work relief program would mean chaos. Mayor Burton of Cleveland declared his city had been compelled to sacrifice street-cleaning service, rubbish and garbage collection and other essential services to provide emergency funds for relief until the Ohio Assembly is scheduled to meet. He said the situation all through Ohio is tense. He also urged that all employable relief cases should be taken over by the federal work program.

Mayor Shaw of Los Angeles characterized the transient relief problem as one of the most serious facing the cities of the far west and south and recommended the re-establishment of federal relief camps for transients.

Mayor Kelly of Chicago predicted that any curtailment of relief is certain to bring about wholesale starvation, evictions and relief disturbances. The officials advocated a national long-range relief policy.

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**UNDOUBTEDLY** the recent activity of the Chicago Chapter in focusing attention on relief needs in Chicago had something to do with Mayor Kelly's contribution to the public discussion of relief inadequacies current and impending, for up until that time he had little to say about relief needs.

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**FIFTY-SEVEN** per cent of persons dependent on public relief in New York City were classified as unemployable by Commissioner of Public Welfare William Hodson as the result of a survey made by the Department of Public Welfare. 201,350 out of 349,350 adults receiving aid from the Emergency Relief Bureau under the Department of Public Welfare were classified as unable to qualify for employment.

Commissioner Hodson urged a wider public health program to cut off some of the relief load at its source. The *New York World-Telegram* in commenting editorially on the report said "A large group of unemployables perhaps may be educated to other jobs or may be absorbed by an increasing demand for labor. Such an increased demand unfortunately is not in prospect for this winter, but at best a large number of unemployables will remain in their present status for an indefinite time in the future. They are not idle from choice and deserve no condemnation on that score; they simply are a responsibility which the city must meet."

**THE FAILURE** of the New Jersey State Legislature to provide funds for unemployment relief during the balance of the year at a meeting on November 14th, prompted Governor Hoffman to declare he would obtain funds elsewhere. He said, "I am not going to let anyone starve during my term of office." The Legislature adjourned until December 20th.

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**POLITICAL** sniping at the Pennsylvania Secretary of Public Assistance for his resistance to patronage demands and his insistence on merit appointments to the state service brought action from the Philadelphia Chapter on November 14th in a telegram to Governor George H. Earle. The Philadelphia Chapter asked the Governor to adhere to his promise of keeping politics out of relief.

The chapter said, "In this crisis the social workers of Philadelphia declare their continued devotion to the principle that the administration of public assistance should be completely divorced from politics. Appointment of a political-minded Secretary of Public Assistance in the place of the present incumbent would influence adversely both the selection of county boards and department of personnel. Certainly any change at this time on the grounds of loosely made charges and reckless innuendoes against an official of recognized probity would be fraught with danger and would seriously undermine public confidence in the administration of public assistance."

The chapter urged the Governor to "resist the present efforts of party leaders." The attack upon the Secretary of Public Assistance by party leaders was based on the premise that "a deserving Democrat, unless he was a graduate of the social service school, had no chance for appointment."

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## PREDICTION

"Encouraging as are the hopes of continued business recovery, it would be folly on my part, it would be folly on your part, to look forward to anything like the complete disappearance of the unemployment problem, and, with it, the disappearance of the unemployed relief problem. Nobody likes to be a pessimistic prophet, but if we are to judge by the experience of foreign countries, particularly England, if we are to draw any conclusions from an analysis of the underlying causes of our present unemployment, we must expect a permanent unemployment of between four and five million, as well as a relief load equivalent to somewhat more than half this figure." *(Excerpts from an address by Corrington Gill, Assistant Administrator, Works Progress Administration, before 32nd Annual Conference, Municipal Finance Officers' Association.)*

# Chicago Spotlights a Crisis

## Chicago Chapter Special Committee on Relief Launches a Publicity Program and Gets Attention.

By MILTON SHUFRO

The Chicago Chapter has taken its case to the public.

Casting aside defensive apologetics, the chapter launched an aggressive attack and publicized its stand and recommendations. The metropolitan press, the radio, civic organizations, trade unions, religious groups, trade, foreign-language, and neighborhood newspapers were the mediums. They responded and at this writing the result is gratifying.

The long range objective is still distant. In less than a week's time, however, from the time when the challenge in the shape of "An Open Letter from Social Workers to Their Fellow Citizens of Illinois," was issued, Chicago has become relief conscious in a way that it never has been before.

—"Well, what's to be done about it," questions the well known syndicated columnist, Howard Vincent O'Brien, of the Chicago *Daily News*, "shall we let these people starve or freeze to death?"

—"Overworking the Case Worker," is the title of an editorial in the same paper.

—The Chicago *Times* wrote an editorial on "My Brother's Keeper," urging federal participation in relief.

—"Relief Crisis Rivets Attention of Unions as Hunger Stalks City," is the headline of an article in the *People's Press*, which begins, "Progressive labor cracked through this week with the first expression of its growing concern about the relief crisis."

—"Will you provide a speaker for our meeting," requests the Chicago Optimists' Club, the Chicago Leather Workers' Union, A. F. of L., the United Hotel and Restaurant Workers, C. I. O.

—"May we have three thousand copies of your open letter to be distributed with our magazine?" queries the editor of *Parent and Child*.

—"I would like members of our national Social Justice Committee to see your letter and have you some extra copies for such purpose," writes a Unitarian minister.

—"I am writing to the Governor and Mayor on the matter and will use the facts therein in many of my future addresses," is the response of an executive of the Chicago Round Table.

—"Wishing you success in a righteous cause," is the closing sentence of a member of the Borrowed Time Club for Elderly People, and another individual, a university student, writes, "May every success attend the efforts of your so desperately needed committee."

—"No hungry child will make a worthwhile citizen," writes a person from Texas in response to our radio talk.

These are but a few of the many expressions from varied sources which came to the chapter three days after the issuance of the "Open Letter." It undoubtedly expresses the opinion of many other organizations and individuals that have not as yet communicated with the chapter or are using and will use the material without the Association's ever becoming cognizant of such action.

The cause of the Chicago group's second impressive publicity campaign in which the chapter requested the cooperation of the national office, is a relief crisis of serious import. It began last September and was met by the press and the public with apathy. The objective and socially constructive treatment it received was niggardly.

On the other hand, there was voiced as panaceas, proposed plans based on vicious theory. A case in point was an article in the Chicago *Daily Tribune*, which intimated incompetence on the part of social workers, slurred professional schools of social service, and proposed the ingenious use of ex-detectives to determine eligibility for relief.

At the bottom of all the conflicting opinion was a fact, tragic to 87,000 families in Chicago. In September and October, the relief funds were short by more than $1,000,000. All the deprivation and suffering which are concommitants of reduced subsistence budgets were experienced by the public relief clients.

The Illinois Workers' Alliance picketed the City Hall in what that organization called a "Death Watch," but this petered out.

The Commissioner of Relief invited about fifty prominent persons, representative of merchants, industry, publishers, and others to meet and attack the problem. The assemblage, addressed by

the Governor, the Mayor, and the Commissioner, could not promise that private industry would employ those on relief when thousands were being laid off.

The group became a Governor's committee, which, in turn, created a smaller committee, the Illinois Council of Public Assistance and Employment, to deal with the emergency.

This situation stimulated the creation of the chapter's Special Committee on Relief. The committee, comprising Joel Hunter, chairman; Mrs. Lenore Levin, Grace Benjamin, Hilda Diamond, and Marietta Stevenson, gathered the facts and crystallized their findings into a comprehensive and detailed report. Wayne McMillen, Chapter chairman, and Lillian Adler who appointed the committee during the absence of Mr. McMillen from the city, participated actively as did the Executive Committee.

From this report, Thomas Hoare, assistant executive secretary of the national office, who came to Chicago on October 25 at the request of the chapter and remained here four days to launch the campaign, created the "Open Letter" to be used for publicity purposes.

To pave the way, as it were, a release on a speech to be made by Charlotte Carr at the Illinois Conference of Social Workers at Rockford, involving the Chicago situation, was prepared.

Simultaneously, contacts were made with the news services and newspapers of city-wide, national, and special interest scope. The release stressed the particular "angle" in which a particular service was interested. For example, the Chicago daily press release concerned itself with the Chicago situation; the *People's Press* release stressed the labor point of view, and the copy for the national news services made mention of the New York relief situation. Though stressing different "angles," all the releases embodied the Chicago relief problem.

One national wire service carried the story, and the local morning and afternoon papers carried it, while several of the papers sent reporters to interview Miss Carr personally.

During this time contacts were also being made with civic leaders, labor representatives, newspapermen and radio executives—a never-ending process during the campaign.

This was the groundwork, and having laid it the chapter then distributed its first broadside of the "Open Letter" as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Civic organizations | 207 |
| Cultural and professional organizations | 225 |
| Welfare organizations which would probably not come in contact with our report unless we specifically mailed it to them | 94 |
| Business and improvement organizations | 304 |
| Other associations not included in above | 133 |
| Labor organizations | 270 |
| Newspapers—foreign and neighborhood | 168 |
| Trade publications | 270 |
| Religious groups | 600 |
| Others | 500 |

Ways and means in which such a publicity program is fostered in the workaday world may be best outlined by considering the publicist. The publicist, like the social worker, to use the latter's terminology, must meet the reality of the situation. In the main, this situation is the newspaper. He knows that which becomes constant does not make news. It is the ephemeral, ever changing that is printed.

That is why we investigated and used photographs of houses which were "not fit for cattle"; why we investigated and learned that many of the clients, forced to spread their meager income over all their needs, were "subsisting on an amount of food of which the cost per meal is less than that provided for dogs by local animal shelters."

The drama in the situation is what gave the editors a "handle" to the story and is what made the "Open Letter" a "good yarn." As a result, that particular story, featuring the dog and housing angles and embodying in quotations a good part of the "Open Letter," was published as one of the leading first-page stories in one paper and the other two afternoon papers gave it prominent position. That means that a good portion of the citizenry of Chicago and its surrounding territory learned about a socially progressive attitude on relief. It also learned that the Chicago Chapter of the American Association of Social Workers was an organization which was sensitive to the situation and that it offered recommendations towards solving the issue.

Publication of such a program is helpful. There must, however, be more than that. People must not only know. They must act. Public officials must not only know and understand, they must appreciate the attitude of their constituency.

To this end many things have already occurred.

The newspapers wrote editorials. They sent reporters to interview welfare leaders. They published the strong protest of the State, County and Municipal Workers of America, C. I. O.,

against the proposed dismissal of relief employees. The series of stories by "Case Worker" in the Chicago *Daily News* occurred co-incidentally with the drive and will prove and have proven to be of inestimable value.

Station WENR gave the chapter free time over the radio. Requests for Joel Hunter's speech are being received—one such request was from the British Consul General of Chicago. It is likely that another station may give us more time.

Labor leaders have been interviewed by us and the labor press has been stimulated to the point where they are now about to make the relief problem their main story. This press in its turn is interviewing the labor leaders and printing such information on proposed plans to meet the situation. The South Chicago Branch of the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee has already held a large meeting and sent constructive resolutions to the Governor and Mayor, suggesting a sounder program.

A special session of the legislature, which was considered a dead issue some weeks ago, is once again being mentioned in press dispatches from Springfield, Ill.

Local organizations are considering the relief problem and neighborhood and foreign newspapers, already acquainted with our open letter, will undoubtedly report such meetings.

It is rumored that the Illinois Council on Public Assistance and Employment, appointed by the Governor, may itself suggest a special relief session.

Funds for direct relief by the Federal Government are part of a living, growing program. The editorial of the Chicago *Daily Times,* administration paper, immediately following the release of the news letter, attests to that. The contracting WPA program has promise of some expansion to help meet the emergency.

Though we cannot, in every instance, point to tangible results, our contacts have had meaning. We found newspapermen, trade, labor, civic associations and religious leaders naive about theory and practices of the work of the professional social worker. Naive, yes, but in every instance eager and willing to learn; to have questions answered; to secure what clarification we were able to give them. On the whole, they were much more receptive than before.

In our case, the fact that the newspapers reported our side of the story; the fact that organizations disseminated our material, passed resolutions, called meetings, asked for speakers, listened purposely and purposefully to our radio talk, acknowledged our letter, were all part of the dynamics of the situation which may be considered an asset now and for the future.

***The following is an excerpt from the Chicago Chapter open letter:***

**THE FACTS**

**Thousands of Chicago families, without other means of support and dependent on public relief agencies, face a prolonged period of intense suffering unless drastic and immediate steps are taken to forestall what experienced, competent observers declare will be the "most severe period of mass suffering that Chicago has ever experienced since the beginning of the depression."**

**Briefly, the situation is this:**

**(1) There are more than 87,000 families (approximately 215,000 men, women and children) dependent upon public relief for their existence.**

**(2) *More than three and a half million dollars monthly are needed* to provide minimum subsistence allowances for these persons.**

**(3) In both September and October, the funds available fell short of this needed amount by more than $1,000,000 each month.**

**(4) Officials say the outlook for additional funds is not encouraging.**

**THE EFFECT**

**Faced with this situation, relief officials have attempted to fit the program to the available funds, with the result that relief allowances, never adequate, have been curtailed to perilously low levels in some instances and eliminated entirely in others. As a direct result of this curtailment, families dependent upon relief have already been forced to endure severe hardship which will be increasingly aggravated with the arrival of colder weather.**

**The study of relief families reveals:**

**(1) Wholesale eviction of families unable to pay even the meager rents demanded for such lodging.**

**(2) Large families, often several families, huddling in uninhabitable slum hovels and basement lodgings without sufficient heat. Some families forced to separate so that they may secure shelter from friends and relatives.**

**(3) Children being kept from school for lack of shoes or essential clothing.**

**(4) Desperate parents pleading with courts to assume guardianship of their children, so that their youngsters may be provided with care in foster homes or institutions.**

**(5) Families groping about their dwellings in the dark because no lights can be provided in relief budgets.**

**(6) Men, women, and children existing on near starvation level diets.**

**(7) Wholesale suffering, aggravated by fear and anxiety for the future approach of severe winter weather.**

(*Continued from page 5*)

four were elected to their positions. For example, the elected chairman of the Nominating Committee is also a member of the Personnel Practices Committee. That chapter members are ready to serve as the opportunity arises is evidenced by the response on the part of a very large number when they were called upon in connection with the relief crisis in the summer of 1936. Ample opportunity should be provided for members who are interested but who are not now serving on committees. Preparation for the Delegate Conference is one example of the possibility for wide participation.

## STUDY GROUPS

While action is the ultimate goal of committees, that of study groups is to offer members opportunity for acquiring information and knowledge. In evaluating the chapter's experience with study groups during the past six months, it appears that participation was sought on the basis of interest. Of the one hundred and fifty members who signed up for study groups, only thirty-five members continued to meet in four different groups.

Supervision
Housing
Community Interpretation
Case Work and Group Work.

Obviously the expressed interest did not lead to membership in study groups. Further some members of the Committee on Study Groups questioned whether the entire structure of the study groups, including the choice of subject and leadership, has not been superimposed rather than a growth from within. This high mortality rate may at first glance appear discouraging unless we accept the fact that any device justifies itself when even a very small number of members relate themselves closer to the professional organization. Since in the membership is found gradation of interest in professional activities and opportunities to satisfy them, it becomes doubtful if the chapter management can or should plan such participation for all. Numbers should cease to be the sole criterion of chapter participation.

## ADMINISTRATION

With the enlarged membership of the chapter, it is becoming increasingly impossible for the elected officers to administer an active program as an extra-curricular activity. Spread of responsibilities is both necessary and desirable. To correlate the extended activities of a larger number of people, however, is a job in itself. The same is true if there is to be some element of control of committee activities, which is essential to good organization. Any effective program involves expenses that are now partly borne voluntarily by individuals and agencies. In view of limitations in chapter funds it has often been necessary to curtail activities. For example, the publication of two bulletins in 1934, one of which included an annual report of the chapter's activities, was discontinued because of lack of funds. Another very important administrative problem which has not received adequate attention is the question of a central office for chapter files. Essential information is inaccessible for consultation because it is buried in the files of various agencies in the city.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee believed that pointing out the problems that face the chapter, from the point of view of organization and participation, would be incomplete without indicating possible means of meeting them. In formulating recommendations we wish to present something practical which can be put into effect in the immediate future. Though some of the recommendations were either explicitly stated or implied in the foregoing report, we are listing briefly the following recommendations:

1. Part-time secretary.
2. Central chapter office.
3. Increase in local dues on a sliding scale.
4. Committee on Committees.
   (In order to have planned rather than random participation.)
5. Committee on Activities.
   (This committee to be concerned not with the program of meetings, but with the general activities in the chapter.)
6. Committee on Publicity.
7. Experimentation with forum type of meetings.
8. Sharing of Executive Committee business with membership.
9. Plan for induction of new members.
10. Question Box to determine membership sentiment.

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## THE MORE ABUNDANT LIFE

WPA headquarters at Washington announce that, because of reduced federal relief appropriations, WPA will cut its free-school-lunch program from one serving a million pupils throughout the country to one serving "several hundred thousand." *(New York Post.)*

**Delegate Conference Seattle, Wash., June 23, 24, 25, 1938**

Miss Edna Zimmerman 2
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